TRADITIONAL MARTINIST ORDER

ORATORY SECTION

FIRST DEGREE

LESSON THREE

"It is not the head which is necessary to advance in Truth; it is the heart."

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FIRST DEGREE NUMBER THREE

CONCURRENCE

The cross, among other symbols, is of great importance in Martinism. As explained in this lesson, its symbolism goes far beyond that to which it is assigned in Christianity. In accordance with this, we propose to you the following excerpt from René Guénon's *The Symbolism of the Cross*.

Most traditional doctrines symbolize the realization of the "Universal Human" by a sign that is the same everywhere because it relates directly to the Primordial Tradition. This symbol is the sign of the cross, which represents well how this realization is to be attained through the perfect harmonization of all states of being, through full development in all directions – the material and the spiritual. Indeed this dual development may be regarded as taking place on the one hand, horizontally, that is to say to a certain level pre-determined and, on the other hand, vertically, that is to say, through all hierarchical levels. Thus the horizontal direction represents the full extension of individuality based on a set of possibilities subject to certain special conditions of manifestation. The vertical direction represents the hierarchy as indefinite and comprises multiple worlds, all of which are included in the total synthesis of the "Universal Human."

René Guénon (1886-1951)

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FIRST DEGREE NUMBER THREE

SYMBOLISM
The Fundamental Symbols

Dear Supplicant,

I greet you before the Luminaries of the Traditional Martinist Order!

The previous manuscript was dedicated to general concepts about symbolism. We will continue by examining some of the basic symbols that you need to know as a Martinist. In the next monograph, we will focus on those that have a direct relationship with our Tradition.

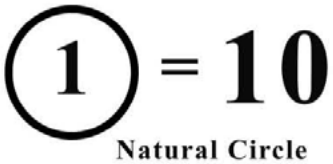
The *Zohar* states: "When the Unknown of Unknowns wanted to appear, the Unknown started by producing a dot. Until this luminous dot had come out of the Unknown's breast, the Infinite remained completely unknown." The dot is therefore the center; the immaterial principle from which all manifested things come into existence. In other words, it marks the potentiality of creation and, by extension, Divine Unity. It also symbolizes the limit of abstraction. The universe, which is often represented by a circle, is only the development or the manifestation of an invisible center that is impossible to locate in space. According to Plotinus, the center is the father of the circle. For Angelus Silesius, the dot contains the circle. These are two different, but complementary, approaches to the same symbolism.

The center is first manifested as a straight line, which is made up of a multitude of dots aligned next to each other. The line is the projection of the dot toward infinity. In *Of Errors and Truth*, Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin tells us "the line perpetuates toward the Infinite, the production of the dot from which it emanates." In the Martinist Tradition, the line therefore symbolizes the movement and the apparition of life. It also represents the perfection and righteousness of the individual who lives in harmony with the mysterious center, the source of all that exists - God. The straight line is associated with the number four in Martinism.

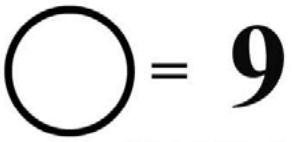
The curved line limits the development of the straight line and encloses itself to form a circle. In our teachings, the circle symbolizes the limits of creation, its dimension in space and time. It also represents life manifested in a sentient world. Moreover, when one wishes to draw a circle, it is necessary to use a compass, which forms a triangle in the process of drawing. That is why the Martinist Tradition teaches that the circle is born from the triangle and that the triangle is the first figure to limit a surface. This explains the importance of the ternary in Martinism.

Although the circle symbolizes the limitation of the material world, it also represents the

entire creation in its spiritual mode. In the first case, it is called the artificial circle. In the second case, it is called the natural circle because it is created by the natural expansion of its center and simultaneously grows in all directions. Further, it is not possible to know where one would find the center or the circumference of the natural circle. That is why the natural circle is the symbol of creation in its spiritual, eternal, and infinite aspects. In the Martinist Tradition, it is represented by the number ten, which is written with the number 1 surrounded by a circle. As for the artificial circle, associated with the material world, it is represented by the number 9.



Natural Circle



Artificial Circle

Here is what Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin tells us about the circle in *Of Errors and Truth*:

> *It probably will not trouble anyone to consider a circumference as zero; because, what figure can represent a circumference better than the zero? It will trouble even less to regard its center as a unit, because it is impossible to have more than one center for one circumference. Everyone also knows that one unit added to zero gives ten…. Therefore, we can see the circle as being ten, or the center with its circumference. But we can also see the entire circle as a corporal being, the circumference being the corporal form and the center being the Immaterial Principle. However, we have seen in detail that we should never confuse the Immaterial Principle with the corporal form, even if the existence of matter is based on their union. It would be an unforgivable mistake to consider them as the same being.... Then, separating this Principle from its corporal form is the same thing as separating the center from its circumference and consequently, removing the unit 1 from the denary 10. However, if we remove one unit from the denary 10, it is certain that the only number left will be 9, the only figure left will be zero, or the curved line or circumference.*

Let us now see what can be said about the cross. Used since time immemorial, this universal symbol does not belong exclusively to Christianity, as it is generally believed. Besides, the Christian Church seems to have lost the profound meaning of the cross, because Christianity only uses it as the representation of a particular event, Christ's crucifixion. Generally, the union

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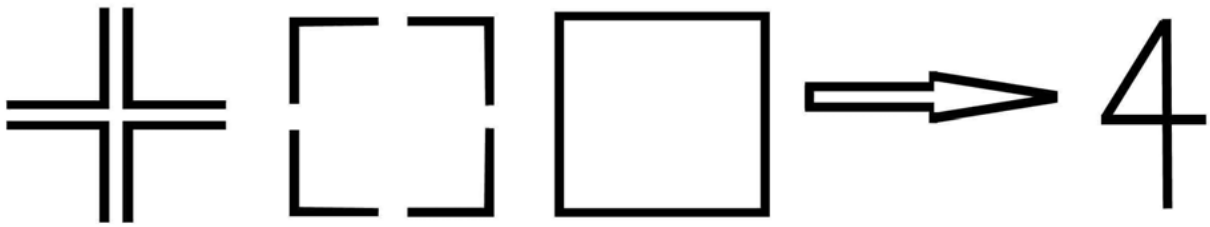
of two lines, one horizontal and the other one vertical, forms the cross. The horizontal line symbolizes the terrestrial plane. The vertical line rises toward the infinite and represents humanity's aspiration toward the Divine. Linked at their center, these two lines symbolize the union between the material and spiritual worlds.

In most traditions, the cross symbolizes Universal Humanity, a being who has blossomed in the material world, represented by the horizontal line, as well as in the spiritual world, represented by the vertical line. The cross also represents the union of opposites, its center being the place where there is a reconciliation of the opposites that are balanced in harmony. Moreover, the center of the cross corresponds to what the eastern tradition calls the *Chung-Yung*, the "point of perfect balance," the "invariable middle," or the "axis of the cosmic wheel." According to the Taoist doctrine, whoever has reached the central point and remains there in indissoluble union with the Divine Principle is a perfect sage.

The Martinist Tradition attributes the number four to the cross. From an esoteric point of view, the cross has a particular connection with the square, also associated with the same number. Indeed, the square can be constructed from a cross. This diagram shows that the square can be broken up into four T-squares. Changing the orientation of these four T-squares forms a cross. As you will see later in your Martinist studies, numerous relations exist between the cross, the square, and the dot, also called the unit.



Since the beginning of this monograph, we have made reference several times to numbers. Numbers have always been an important part of symbolism. For the ancients, they represented the laws that God used to create the universe. That is why they considered numbers as theosophical, meaning that they were elements revealing Divine Wisdom. For the Greek philosophers, the first ten numbers were particularly sacred. They also thought that all complex numbers should be reduced to simple numbers in order to reveal their profound significance.

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This is why they used an operation called theosophical reduction to reduce a number composed of several digits to a simple value. This operation consists in adding the different digits composing a number until one gets a number formed of only one digit. For example, if we wish to know the theosophical value of the number 144, we just need to add 1, 4 and 4. We get 9 (1 + 4 + 4 = 9).

There is another operation that serves to determine the esoteric value of a number. It is called theosophical addition. It is done by adding all the numbers contained in a number starting with the unit one and continuing until the given number. For example, to obtain the theosophical addition of the number 4, it is necessary to add all the numbers composing it, starting with 1 until 4. This will give 10 (1 + 2 + 3 + 4). However, if we made the theosophical reduction of the number 10, we obtain 1 (1 + 0); that is to say the unit. This explains why the Pythagoreans worshiped what they called the *Most Holy Tetracktys*; the theosophical addition of the first four numbers.

Among all the elements used in symbolism, colors also have an important role. That said, a given color can have very different meanings depending on the traditions and cultures to which it relates. If we take yellow, for example, we note that in western cultures, this color is generally associated with lies, deception, and melancholy. On the contrary, in eastern cultures, and more especially in China, it symbolizes life, prosperity, and joy. This example demonstrates that when we want to understand the profound meaning of a symbol, it is important to know in what context it is used. Although symbolism is a universal language, it is nevertheless filtered by cultural and secular traditions. If this aspect is neglected, one risks committing a mistake in interpretation.

As was explained in the introductory ritual, black, red and white are of particular importance in the Martinist Tradition. We will see why in a future monograph. For now, we will only say that these three colors correspond to the laws and principles that operate in both the microcosm and in the macrocosm. They also symbolize the three major stages that mark the progress of all Martinists on the path of Reintegration.

May you ever dwell in the Eternal Light of Divine Wisdom!

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PRACTICAL APPLICATION

As we have stated in this monograph, symbolism plays an important role in Martinism because it is the language that mystics use to describe the great truths of life and Divine Laws, as manifested on the visible and invisible planes of creation. This is how geometrical figures, colors and numbers convey a hidden meaning for anyone who has been initiated into their esoteric use. However, as with all language, symbolism has rules, standards, and particular conventions. This is the reason why the meaning of certain symbols can vary among cultures, religions or other traditions.

Perhaps you were already interested in symbolism before you joined the Traditional Martinist Order? In this case, you have probably read books explaining the meaning of various symbols whether they are geometric figures (triangles, squares, circles, etc.) or numbers, notably those from 1 to 10. Without questioning what you have already learned about them, you may put this information aside while you discover what the Traditional Martinist Order says about them. While most mystical symbols have universal meanings, there are some whose meaning may vary depending on whether one looks at them through the lens of Martinism, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry or any other authentic tradition. Keep this is mind as you study the subsequent monographs.

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SUMMARY

After carefully studying this monograph, read the following summary. It contains the major points that you may want to reflect and meditate on during the coming days. If you have trouble understanding one of the points, return to the explanations given in the monograph. Immerse yourself in learning the points covered in this summary before proceeding with the study of the next monograph.

- All symbols are composed of a set of elements. These elements may be geometric figures, numbers, or particular colors.

- The dot is the center, the immaterial principle from which all manifested things come into existence. In other words, it characterizes the potentiality of creation and, by extension, Divine Unity.

- The straight line is the projection of the dot toward the infinite. In the Martinist Tradition, it is associated with the number 4 and symbolizes the movement and beginning of life.

- From a Martinist point of view, the circle is born from the triangle, the latter being the first figure to limit a surface.

- The circle represents either the material world and its limits, or the entire Creation, in its spiritual, eternal, and infinite aspects. In the first case, it is called the *artificial circle* and corresponds to the number 9. In the second case, it is called the *natural circle* and is associated with the number 10.

- The cross is a universal symbol and is not specific to the Christian Church. It symbolizes the union between the material and spiritual worlds. In Martinism, it is associated with the number 4.

- For the Ancients, numbers represented the laws that God used to create the universe. That is why they considered numbers as *theosophical*, as elements revealing Divine Wisdom.

- Two operations can be used to determine the esoteric value of a number. The first is known as theosophical reduction; the second is called theosophical addition.

- When studying a symbol, it is important to know in what context it is used. Although symbolism is a universal language, it is nevertheless filtered by culture and secular traditions.

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